

The University of Chicago

A SURVEY OF MONTREAL LIBRARY
FACILITIES AND A PROPOSED
PLAN FOR A LIBRARY
SYSTEM

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

JUNE, 1942

By
MARY DUNCAN CARTER

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The lack of public library service in the City of Montreal has long been under discussion. Although various explanations of the situation have appeared, very little has been done to determine specific underlying causes, to examine possible substitutes for public libraries, or to suggest a solution to the problem of providing adequate library service to the reading public of Montreal. This study undertakes (1) a brief review of the historical background of Montreal and the social factors affecting the library situation, (2) a survey of the existing library situation in Montreal, and (3) the outlining of a proposed library system for Greater Montreal.

Historical Background and Social Factors

Unless the basic events which led to the establishment of Montreal are kept constantly in mind, it is impossible to understand the conflicts for social control inherent in the province which have such an important bearing upon the entire library situation. On the one hand, there is the strong tradition of the church, which controls a large part of the educational system and which naturally "deems it its duty to exercise rights of selection, supervision and control"¹ over the reading habits of the Catholics (who represent 73 per cent of the total population). On the other hand, educators and professional leaders who understand the benefits of a public library system, as well as educated laymen, have made various efforts to establish public library service for all of Montreal. The roots of the conflict go deep into Quebec his-

¹Commission of Enquiry into the Library Situation in Canada, Libraries in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press; Chicago: American Library Association, 1933), p. 34.

tory. With a knowledge of the historical beginnings of Montreal and the Province of Quebec one can well understand the statement made by the Commission of Enquiry on the libraries of Canada: ". . . the library problem in the Province of Quebec is not one capable of quick and easy, or happy and final solution."¹

In summarizing the relevant facts with respect to Montreal, it must be repeated that throughout the study the term "Montreal" as used refers not only to the city proper but to the six additional municipalities which compose Greater Montreal. The concern of this study is to investigate existing library services and to plan a public library system for the entire area, including over thirteen and a half square miles and a total population of almost a million people. In 1931, 60 per cent of the population of this city was French and 27 per cent British. Seventy-three per cent was Catholic. Although figures were not available for Montreal proper, it is known that in the Province of Quebec 56.2 per cent of the people spoke French only and 13.8 per cent spoke English only, and 29.3 per cent spoke both French and English. These figures serve as an indication of the linguistic situation in Montreal.

In the present survey, it is important to note that the city under study is primarily an industrial and manufacturing center which in addition serves as an important Canadian port. In 1931, well over one-fourth of the wage earners in Montreal were employed in manufacturing industries, primarily in the manufacture of textile and iron products. Eleven per cent of the workers were engaged in transportation and communication enterprises.

These facts suggest some of the extremely complex social problems which must exist in any city which is made up of two such clearly homogeneous groups (the French Canadian Catholics and the British Canadian Protestants). It should be recognized at the outset that the library problem is but one of many social problems which arise out of the history of Montreal and the nature of its population.

The Library Pattern of Montreal

The survey of libraries in Montreal reveals that not

¹Commission of Enquiry into the Library Situation in Canada, Libraries in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press; Chicago: American Library Association, 1933), p. 34.

counting school libraries, there were all together 148 separate libraries serving Montreal in 1933. Of this number, 4 were public, 25 church, 25 college and university, 54 special and 40 rental libraries. These figures, which show the all-over library pattern of Montreal, indicate that the city population, lacking a strong centralized public library system, relies far more upon special and rental libraries than do the reading publics in Cleveland, Baltimore or Toronto (all of which have a main public library with extension service through such outlets as branches and deposit stations). Thus it appears that Montreal had more than twice as many special libraries as any one of these cities and over six times as many rental libraries. Also, peculiar to the Montreal library pattern are the parish libraries, whose importance cannot be overestimated in a city which is 73 per cent Catholic.

The statutes of the Province of Quebec provide that any municipality may pass by-laws for the establishment and maintenance of public libraries. This law is weak in comparison with that of many of the provinces and most of the American states inasmuch as it omits specific recommendations as to organization and financial support. Two of the four public libraries of Greater Montreal, namely the Civic Library and the Westmount Public Library, have been established under this Quebec statute. The Fraser and Mechanics Institutes each have their own acts of incorporation.

The Civic Library is the only one of the four libraries which is supported and operated by the city government. Established in 1902, the original collection was moved from place to place during the first fifteen years of its operation. Finally, in 1917, a new library building was completed on the edge of La Fontaine Park in the heart of the French working class area, the site which it now occupies. Library business is conducted in French, and it is the only one of the four libraries with a card catalog in that language.

The Civic Library has never received adequate or continuous support from the city. The library has always been among the first projects to suffer from budget economy. Thus, although the library is housed in a fine up-to-date library building with accommodation for 400,000 books, it had in 1933 a general collection of less than 40,000 volumes.

The Fraser Institute is the only public library in the downtown shopping district. It opened its doors in 1885, having been established with funds bequeathed by Hugh Fraser, a public-spirited citizen of Montreal. It has the largest collection of any of the public libraries, but suffers from the handicap of limited physical accommodations.

The Mechanics Institute was originally established in 1828, but was discontinued after seven years of operation. It was reorganized in 1840 and has operated continuously from that date. In 1912, the Mechanics Institute attempted to amalgamate its own library with the Fraser Institute. Six different plans were presented to the Fraser Institute Board of Governors, but all were rejected. Finally, the Mechanics Institute erected its own library building at the corner of Atwater and Tupper Streets on the eastern boundary of Westmount, which was completed in 1920. The Mechanics Institute still occupies this building.

The Mechanics Institute library is fairly well operated. Its Board of Governors takes an unusually active interest in library affairs. It is entirely supported by subscription fees. Borrowers must pay an annual subscription fee of five dollars for the use of the library.

Westmount Public Library, which serves exclusively residents of that municipality, was opened in 1899. It is the only one of the four public libraries situated in an upper class neighborhood. Although it is a small public library it has long been regarded as the only well-operated tax-supported library in the province.

The parish libraries also play an important role in the library life of Montreal. The twenty-four parish libraries, established between 1871 and 1933, are located in church buildings in the French-speaking parishes of the city. In practically all cases, library accommodations are extremely limited, library collections small, and hours of library service restricted. None of the parish libraries have trained personnel. Nevertheless, these libraries have the confidence of the members of the Catholic Church, who hesitate to rely on other sources for their reading. Consequently parish libraries must be considered along with the public libraries in the survey of library facilities in Montreal.

Resources of the Public Libraries

The resources of each of the four Montreal public libraries and of the so-called "public library system" of Montreal have been surveyed and evaluated by investigating first the size and nature of the book collections, then the amount of money spent annually for the upkeep of the library collections.

In 1933 the "public library system" of Montreal contained approximately 268,000 volumes. This figure appeared extremely small when compared with public library holdings in cities of comparable size. For example, Cleveland, with a population of almost 40,000 less than Montreal, has a total of over 1,800,000 volumes, or almost seven times as many volumes as the Montreal "library system." When holdings are measured according to volumes per capita population, Montreal compares even less favorably with the other four cities. Montreal has .3 volumes per capita whereas Toronto has 1.0, and Cleveland as high as 2.0 per capita.

The Montreal public library collection contains 70,000 French volumes. In other words, a little over a quarter of the total Montreal collection was French. The French collections, however, were concentrated in two libraries, the Civic and the Fraser Institute. One-quarter of the French holdings were special collections of purely historical interest.

According to 1933 estimates of librarians, approximately 60 per cent of the holdings of the total "public library system" were non-fiction. In the case of the individual library, percentages of non-fiction holdings varied from 40 per cent at Fraser to 90 per cent at Civic. Montreal collections have a higher proportion of non-fiction than is found in most public libraries. This is due primarily to the large special collections which are found in most of the libraries.

As a method of evaluating recency and adequacy of collections, the A. L. A. Catalog, 1926-31 was used as a standard and checked against the 1933 collections of each of the four libraries. It was found that the public libraries as a group had together purchased 43.2 per cent of the titles listed in the 1926-31 A. L. A. Catalog. The four public libraries combined had purchased two-thirds of the fiction and about 40 per cent of the non-fiction of the listed titles. Thus it appears that relatively speaking the fiction collections seem to be more up-to-date than

the non-fiction collections.

With respect to types of non-fiction, the biography collections of the four Montreal public libraries appear to be more adequate and more recent than any others as measured by a comparison with the 1926-31 A. L. A. Catalog. Travel, useful arts, history and natural science are other classes of non-fiction which appear to be fairly well represented in the total combined holdings of the four public libraries. The Mechanics Institute, on the whole, seemed to have the best balanced and the most recent collection, and the Civic Library the least adequate and recent collection as measured by A. L. A. standards.

With respect to balance of collection, the distribution of non-fiction holdings of the Montreal "public library system" in 1933 compared very closely with that of the 1926-31 A. L. A. Catalog. Thus it was found that although the four Montreal public libraries combined purchased only 40 per cent of the 1926-31 non-fiction publications recommended by the A. L. A. Catalog, those that were purchased were well distributed among non-fiction classes. The purchasing policies of the individual libraries were not so well balanced. Mechanics Institute and Westmount Public Library rated best with respect to balance of non-fiction purchases.

With respect to book budgets the investigation showed that in 1933 the four Montreal public libraries together spent something over \$18,000 for the upkeep of their respective collections. When compared to other cities, Montreal again shows up very poorly. Montreal public libraries combined spent two cents per capita, whereas Baltimore spent five cents, Toronto and St. Louis fifteen and fourteen cents respectively, and Cleveland spent twenty-three cents per capita.

Of the four public libraries in Montreal, Civic Library had the highest and Fraser Institute the lowest book budget in 1933. Although the book budgets are extremely low, a comparison of 1928 to 1931 and 1933 figures shows that book budgets of all the libraries (with the possible exception of the Fraser Institute) appear to be on the increase. The increase is small, however, amounting to a combined total of about \$3,000 every two or three years.

Thus altogether it may be seen that the resources for the four Montreal public libraries with respect to both library hold-

ings and book budgets are extremely limited when compared with cities of comparable size. No city in the United States which has a population which compares even roughly with that of Montreal has so small a library system as that of Canada's largest city. Even Toronto, two-thirds the size of Montreal, has over three times as many volumes per capita and almost five times as large a book budget. The need for larger book budgets in Montreal public libraries is pressing. The small rate of increase in the total book expenditures between 1928 and 1933 is insignificant when compared to what is required if this system is to serve the population of Greater Montreal.

The resources of Montreal public libraries appear even more limited when the nature of the collections is studied. A strikingly high proportion of the total holdings is made up of special collections. The general collections of the four public libraries when combined, although small as to number, make a fairly well-balanced collection. Of the individual libraries, only the Mechanics Institute and the Westmount Public Library appear to have fairly well-balanced recent collections.

Use of the Public Libraries

In 1933, there were over 17,000 borrowers of the Montreal "public library system." This number is exceedingly small, considering the size of the city. After comparing Montreal with cities of comparable size it was found that figures on library borrowers, both in terms of absolute numbers and percentage of total population, show Montreal to have a markedly smaller number of borrowers than any of the four cities.

When only the Montreal figures were studied, it was evident that in 1933 the Westmount Public Library had the largest number of borrowers (7,873), and the Fraser Institute the second largest (6,354). The Civic Library, which is the city library of Montreal, had less than one-quarter as many borrowers as Westmount. The Mechanics Institute, with 1,162 borrowers, served the smallest group of any of the four libraries.

A survey of the age and sex of the borrowing groups revealed that slightly less than 10 per cent of the 17,384 borrowers were children. All of them were borrowers of the Westmount Public Library, since the other three libraries serve only persons fifteen years of age or over. The Fraser Institute, the Mechanics

Institute and the Civic Library had about three men to every two women among the borrowing groups. At the Westmount Public Library, this ratio was reversed. In the total "public library system" about 55 per cent of the borrowers were men.

Occupational data were obtainable for many of the borrowers. On the basis of available information, it appeared that the five occupational groups which used the libraries most were professional, managerial, clerical, sales and skilled workers. Professional borrowers were the largest single group at both the Fraser Institute and the Westmount Public Library. Clerical and kindred workers formed the largest single group at the Mechanics Institute. At the Civic Library 8.2 per cent of the borrowers were skilled workers, the largest single occupational group at this library.

A survey of the geographic distribution of registered borrowers of the four libraries showed that the Fraser Institute had more borrowers coming from outlying districts of the city than any other of the four libraries. Both the Fraser Institute and the Civic Library showed concentration of borrowers in French-speaking districts. The Civic Library appeared to serve French working class areas, whereas the Fraser Institute served middle class French districts. Westmount borrowers were, of course, limited (with the exception of 2.5 per cent) to residents of the municipality of Westmount. In the case of all the libraries, the majority of borrowers appeared to live within a mile of the library buildings. Most of the 1933 borrowers of the so-called "public library system" lived in a four by five-mile rectangular area bounded on the east by Papineau Street, on the west by Decarie Boulevard, on the north by Cote St. Catherine Road and on the south by the Lachine Canal.

Figures on book circulation for 1933 showed that the libraries of Greater Montreal had a combined circulation much smaller than cities of comparable size. In the same year, Baltimore, Toronto, St. Louis and Cleveland all supported public libraries with total circulation of about three million or more. The combined circulation of the four Montreal public libraries was less than half a million volumes, or less than one-sixth of the circulation of Baltimore and about one-twentieth of that of the Cleveland Public Library. Figures on circulation per capita also showed Montreal to rank far below these cities. Its per capita

circulation figure for 1933 was about one-twelfth of the A. L. A. standards.

Among the four Montreal libraries, the Westmount Public Library had the largest circulation, with the Fraser Institute second. The Civic Library and the Mechanics Institute had circulations of less than half as large as either the Fraser Institute or the Westmount Public Library. The Mechanics Institute had an unusually high figure for circulation per registered borrower, 65.3 books per borrower. Westmount Public Library, on the other hand, with the largest number of borrowers and the largest circulation of any of the libraries, had the smallest circulation per borrower.

The facts thus far have indicated that there are many potential borrowers throughout the city who are not receiving public library service. Among the groups which are not being served are the French, juvenile and student readers, as well as the Montreal housewives. Location of the libraries which requires that many readers travel many miles for service, nature of the book collections, and the restrictions of the church upon the reading habits of the people appear to be the main factors operating to limit the use of the library by these groups. In the case of juvenile readers, provisions are simply lacking in most of the libraries. Westmount is the only public library which offers service to children as an integral part of its library program, although the Fraser Institute houses a children's collection.

Book Sources of Bell Telephone Employees A Case Study

When book sources used by Bell Telephone Company employees and the types of books borrowed from each were investigated, it was found that the public libraries were less frequently used than any other source listed in the questionnaire. Only 43 or 6.8 per cent of the 500 persons reporting stated that they had borrowed from any Montreal public library for three months preceding the date of the survey. Of all fiction titles listed among books last borrowed, only 3 per cent came from the public library. Less than 2 per cent of the non-fiction listed was borrowed from this source.

It would be interesting to compare this pattern of reading with studies made in other areas, but at the time this study

was made, most studies of reading had been centered in the public library. Obviously such studies could not furnish data comparable to this survey of reading sources of an industrial group. Since the material was gathered, however, there have been several studies made of communities to determine who are users and who are non-users of the public library and what other sources are used by these groups.¹ One of the best of these is a study by Helen A. Ridgway.² This study concerned the reading habits of 480 registered voters living in the election district in which the Flushing (New York) Queens Borough Branch Library is located. The results of this study appear valid for comparison with the present one despite the fact that the Ridgway study is concerned with reading sources in a residential district, whereas the present study is focussed on place of business. In both instances the persons included for study had access to a public library within a quarter of a mile. The Ridgway study concerns approximately the same number of people, who, like this group, are adult and literate. Although naturally these groups are not exactly comparable, since they represent sections of two altogether different communities, it will be interesting to compare their reading sources.

In comparing the results of this study with those of the Ridgway study one finds that the Bell Telephone Company group had the larger percentage of non-users of the public library (91.4 per cent as compared to 78.9 per cent of the Flushing group). The proportions of our group using rental libraries and purchasing books were approximately the same as those of non-users of the public library in the Flushing study. Bell Telephone Company readers, however, appeared to rely much more heavily upon their friends as a source of reading than did the Flushing residents (56.0 per cent as compared to only 12.3 per cent for the latter group). Also, as would be expected, Bell Telephone employees, with their own special library readily accessible, report a far more extensive use of such special library facilities.³

¹For example, Ethel M. Fair, "The Public Library Versus Other Sources of Books" (Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Chicago, June, 1935).

²Helen A. Ridgway, "Reading Habits of Adult Non-Users of the Public Library," (Community Studies in Reading, III), Library Quarterly, VI (1936), 1-33.

³In evaluating comparative figures, it must be stressed

On the whole, the Bell Telephone Company group appears to include a far larger number of regular readers than is found in the Flushing group. Since this is the case, one may well inquire how it happens that a group of active readers overlooks the public library as a source of reading, despite the fact that the Fraser Institute is close at hand. There are several factors which contribute to the lack of use of this conveniently located public library. The Fraser Institute is without question the least attractive of all the Montreal public libraries and has many other physical characteristics of the library which make it inconvenient to use.

From material presented so far in this survey of the Montreal public libraries, however, it would appear obvious that the primary factor restricting public library use by Bell Telephone employees (as by other members of the community) is the fact that public library book collections are inadequate and outdated. This fact would serve particularly to discourage well-informed readers, like the Bell Telephone employee group.

That the Bell Telephone employees are potentially important borrowers of the public library is shown by the fact that as many as 8.6 per cent of them borrowed from the library despite the existing inadequacies of public library service. The proportion of Bell Telephone Company public library users is high when compared to Montreal as a whole. This questionnaire study shows that the proportion of Bell Telephone employees who used the public library in a period of three months was four times as great as the proportion of the total population who used the public libraries in an entire year.

The Parish Libraries

No survey of library service in Montreal is complete without a thoroughgoing examination and evaluation of the parish

that the figures relate to reading sources of Bell Telephone employees during a three-month period only, whereas the Ridgway figures cover an indefinite period. As a result, the Bell Telephone figures have greater significance. For example, although approximately the same proportion of Bell Telephone employees purchased books as did non-users of the public library in Flushing (40.2 per cent as compared to 41.2 per cent), actually this figure suggests that there was more book buying among Bell Telephone employees than the other group since this figure includes only those persons who purchased books during a three-months period.

libraries. There are twenty-four parish libraries in Montreal, all of which are located in French parishes and most of which have been in existence for many years. At the time the study was made, fourteen parish libraries had been in existence ten years or more and six had been operating for twenty years or more. These libraries are part of the traditional background of the Catholic community. Their purpose is to supply the parishes with reading acceptable to the church.

Actually, the collections of the parish libraries are not large. In 1933, the largest library, Immaculée Conception (which is over four times as large as any other), had a book stock of 26,154 volumes. One-third of the libraries had collections of less than a thousand volumes. The median figure for size of collections was 1,580.

Parish library collections appear even smaller when described in terms of volumes per parishioner. Immaculée Conception supplies its parish with 1.4 books per person. This is, however, far in excess of that furnished by most of the parish libraries. One-third of the libraries supplied one book for every ten parishioners.

Parish library collections, nevertheless, appeared to be increasing slowly. Of those which were in existence throughout the period and for which data were available, seven had increased their collections (by a total of 7,569 volumes) as against seven which showed a decrease (of 7,987 volumes). Five parish libraries, reporting a combined total of 4,755 volumes, were opened during the five-year period between 1928 and 1933. Therefore, on the basis of data from twenty of the twenty-four libraries, it can be stated that the parish library collections were increased by about 4,500 in the five years immediately preceding this study.

The analysis of collections of six parish libraries showed that parish library holdings were largely made up of fiction. In five of the six libraries studied, fiction accounted for over 60 per cent of the holdings. In one library, fiction titles represented over 90 per cent of the collection. From these figures and from firsthand knowledge of the libraries, it is obvious that the primary purpose of the parish libraries is to make available to the members of the parish French fiction which is approved by the church.

Further analysis of the collections of six parish libra-

ries show that religious holdings represented from 2.3 per cent (at St. Edouard) to 25.7 per cent (at Notre Dame du Très St. Sacrement) of the total collections. Non-fiction of a non-religious nature ranged from 7.2 per cent (at St. Jacques) to 42.3 per cent (at Notre Dame du Très St. Sacrement).

There are only very meagre funds available for the upkeep of collections in the twenty-four parish libraries. Most of these are obtained from subscriptions, special fines and donations. According to figures available from nineteen of the libraries, most parish libraries spend less than a hundred dollars a year for the upkeep of the collections. Nine of the libraries spent less than \$50. Only one library spent more than \$400, namely Immaculée Conception, which spent \$1,100 in 1933. Total expenditures for all parish libraries in 1933 could not have exceeded \$3,300.

Unfortunately accurate information with respect to number of library borrowers could not be obtained. It was possible to learn something about library use from circulation figures which were available for fourteen of the libraries. For this group, circulation ranged from 275 at St. Eusebe de Verceil to 45,817 at Immaculée Conception. Circulation of the latter library was more than three times as great as that of the library of second largest circulation (St. Henri). The median figure for circulation of the group in which data were available was 1,780. Circulation for the twenty-four libraries could not have been over about 205,000 in 1933.

The case studies of four parish libraries give a better picture of how the parish libraries operate in their communities. In terms of service offered, they cannot be compared with the public libraries. They are open only a few hours a week, their collections are small and badly balanced and there is no attempt to offer anything approximating professional library service.

Despite these facts, the circulation of these libraries attests to the fact that they are meeting, however inadequately, a real need on the part of the French Catholic readers of Montreal. These people, living mostly in outlying areas far from the Civic and Fraser Institute libraries, find in the parish libraries a source of French fiction reading which they know to be acceptable to their church. These two factors, accessibility and approval of the church, make the parish libraries important reading

sources. Firsthand study of the parish libraries indicates that the number of borrowers is probably high in relation to circulation, since in many parishes there is a rapid turnover of borrowers. The explanation of this high turnover may be found in the limited collections. These facts only illustrate further the need for reading sources for French Catholic readers.

Plan for a Public Library System

Throughout the study, the term "public library system" has been applied to the Civic Library, the Fraser Institute, the Mechanics Institute, and the Westmount Public Library. Actually, there exists no cooperation between the four libraries which would warrant this term of reference. Each one operates as a complete and independent unit. It is not even established practice for one of them to refer readers to another for service. Before any definite proposals for a plan of library development are presented, it is necessary to recall that the French Canadian majority of the population cling with a kind of dogged persistence to their traditional way of life and regard with aloofness and suspicion any attempts to change conditions which have long existed.

The first proposal for library development is in agreement with the present library legislation in the Province of Quebec. By-laws may be passed by municipalities for municipal aid to free public, association and mechanics' institute libraries if the public is permitted to use them without charge. Since this is the case, it would be possible to continue the present group of libraries with increased municipal aid if all restrictions on the use of the libraries were removed. This would involve the removal of deposits for the withdrawal of books from the Civic Library and the Fraser Institute, and the removal of annual membership fees from the Mechanics Institute. Removal of residence requirements for use of the Westmount Public Library and religious restrictions from the parish libraries and the Jewish People's Library would have to be achieved if completely free use of all libraries were to become a reality.

The weakness of this plan lies in the lack of coordination which would continue to be emphasized in duplication of book collections and services as well as unnecessary administrative expense. Surely, twenty-nine separate libraries even though free to all would not provide an integrated library service for the

citizens of Greater Montreal.

The second proposal involves the development of the Civic Library to fulfill its function of the municipal tax-supported library of Montreal. As the only publicly controlled library in the City of Montreal, it would be directly under the sponsorship and control of a city council which is largely French Canadian. It could build up a system of branches located in carefully selected areas and thus supply free public library service to all the citizens. It would in every sense become a typical public library system which is familiar to most of the urban population residing in cities of 600,000 and over on the North American continent. Undoubtedly, this is a goal which every librarian will recognize and wish to see reached. It is apparent, however, that librarians who are familiar with the social, political and religious make-up of the people who live in Montreal recognize the opportunity for misunderstanding and bad feeling if such a proposal were made without the gradual development of a strong and united public opinion.

In order that some sort of adequate library service be supplied immediately without any attempt to disrupt the predispositions of the people, a third plan is proposed. It provides for gradual integration of existing libraries with centralized administrative control. If the functions of the four public libraries of Montreal were delimited in the light of their facilities, resources and locations, the existing libraries could form the basis for an adequate library system. Furthermore, the parish libraries, which serve outlying districts, could be expanded and developed as important library outlets for the French Catholics. With the establishment of additional public libraries in still other areas which are not being served (for example, Outremont and Mount Royal), adequate library service could in time become a reality in Greater Montreal.

In the following pages the rough blueprint for such an all-over library plan for Montreal is laid out. This plan, it will be seen, is merely an adaptation and expansion of the present pattern of library service in Montreal. It affords the best use of existing library facilities and resources, and offers the greatest opportunities for the growth of library service in the community.

The role of the libraries.-- What would be the role of

each of the public libraries in the proposed public library system? In order to answer this question it is necessary to redefine the functions of each library in terms of its location (in relation to economic and language areas), its resources and its existing role in the community. From this point of view, it would appear feasible that the Civic Library become the library center for the French-speaking population of Montreal. This library already serves such a function to a more limited extent, since it is located in a French working class neighborhood and contains the best-balanced if not the largest French collection. The Mechanics Institute could become the public library center for the English-speaking group of Montreal as it is located in an English-speaking neighborhood and contains only books in English. Both of these libraries have excellent physical facilities. The Civic Library is, of course, a much larger institution, but this is also appropriate, since the French-speaking groups constitute the largest proportion of the population.

The Fraser Institute, situated in the center of the shopping district, is accessible to readers from all parts of the city, and could well become the central reference library. Its collection need not be restricted to either French or English books, but it should maintain an adequate and up-to-date reference service with an expanded staff of reference librarians. Again, this recommendation with respect to the Fraser Institute is in keeping with the role which this library has tended to play in the community to date. Although the Fraser Institute began as a reference library, for a time it operated a circulation department. Since this study was made, however, it has returned to its original status as a reference library. These recommendations would merely allow an expansion of this function and a clear definition of its relationship to other libraries.

The Westmount Public Library would on the whole continue to serve its present purpose, as the public library center for the municipality of Westmount. As such, it could serve as a model for similar libraries which might be developed in Outremont, Mount Royal and other outlying municipalities.¹ It could

¹These libraries could operate under the contract system such as has been developed for county libraries. The advantages of the contract system as described by Joeckel seem to apply to the problem of libraries in the Montreal metropolitan area:

become, however, an integral part of the public library system by sharing in certain cooperative functions which will be described below.

In the proposed plan, the role which each of the four libraries would play in the public library system is in no instance a drastic modification of existing functions. However, by specifically defining the objectives of each library, an integrated public library system immediately becomes possible. Instead of each library spreading its services thinly by attempting to offer all services to all readers, each library develops its natural assets (in terms of facilities, resources and location). The functions of the four libraries then combine to form component parts of a total library system which offers to the community what no single library can offer, namely, suitable and well-balanced service.

It might be to the benefit of every library to facilitate the development of such a plan by working out a limited exchange of collections. Before such a transfer of collections could take place, a careful study would have to be made of existing collections in the four libraries and plans worked out with the various boards for such exchanges. For example, from this preliminary study of book collections, it would appear advisable that certain parts of the technical collections of both the Mechanics Institute and the Civic Library (which are used for reference only) be deposited in the Fraser Institute without any transfer of ownership. On the other hand, many of the French books which have circulated from the Fraser Institute could be transferred to the Civic Library, which, as noted above, would become the main circulating library for the French population. Such exchanges of collections would not affect ownership of books nor dislocate special collections which could, without loss of service to the community, be

"First, it permits unification of service, when legal consolidation is not possible or advisable. Second, it allows for piecemeal expansion by which one unit at a time may be added to the central library, and it also permits experimentation when conditions are too uncertain for the use of any other method. Finally, contracts are easily terminated when either party desires a change." C. B. Joeckel, The Government of the American Public Library, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 310.

The libraries in the separate municipalities would function as individual units in which the building, equipment, light, heat and power, etc., would be provided by the municipality, and a certain sum could be contributed annually to the central library system for the support of centralized processing services and rotating book collections.

kept intact in the libraries which now maintain them.

One of the greatest benefits which would accrue from the establishment of such a library system would be the possibilities for centralizing certain technical library processes. By a system of centralized purchasing, classifying and cataloging of books, all the libraries could simplify their technical procedures and reduce their costs. Furthermore, such centralization would create a unified catalog which would make interlibrary loan entirely feasible. The establishment of a union catalog for the four libraries would, of course, have to precede such a step and could take place at the time when collections of the four libraries were reviewed and reallocated. The Civic Library, with its excellent and ample facilities and in its role as the municipal public library of Montreal, would probably serve best as headquarters for such technical library functions. The union catalog might also be located at this center.

The role of the parish libraries.--How would the parish libraries be related to this public library system and how would they fit into an all-over pattern of library service for Montreal? The Commission of Enquiry into the library situation in Canada stated in its report that:

Nothing . . . is clearer than that principles of library organization, eminently practical elsewhere, cannot in every case be applied to the peculiar situation of the Province of Quebec. There one is confronted by conditions, not theories--conditions of race, language and religion, so far as the great majority of the people is concerned, to which any programme of library development must conform, if it is to succeed, or be adopted, or even considered.¹

The report of the Commission further states:

A survey of the facts suggests and indicates that any wise, effective and general library advance in Quebec must be in the direction of encouragement and development of the bibliothèques paroissiales. . . . The revival of those now inactive or moribund, the stimulation to increased efficiency of those now giving a reasonably good local service--these things, it seems to this Commission, offer some present opportunities for provincial library progress.²

Findings on parish libraries are in complete agreement with the Commission with respect to the improvement of parish libraries

¹Commission of Enquiry into the Library Situation in Canada, Libraries in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press; Chicago: American Library Association, 1933), pp. 41-42.

²Ibid., p. 41.

in the development of a library program for Montreal. The survey, however, has yielded enough specific data about the parish libraries so that the suggestions of the Commission may be carried further into a definite plan as to how the parish libraries may be most effectively developed.

The strength of the parish libraries lies first in the fact that they represent reading centers which are acceptable to the church (and thus theoretically to 73 per cent of the total population of Montreal),¹ and second, in the fact that many of them are located in outlying areas not readily served by the public libraries. The problem of parish libraries which are located near the public libraries would have to be worked out to avoid overlapping service. The weaknesses of the parish library system are their meagre physical facilities, limited hours of service, lack of professional personnel and their small, outmoded and poorly balanced collections.

The proposed plan for the parish libraries would parallel that for the public libraries in that it would develop the strength and minimize the weaknesses of existing services. It would provide that deposit collections of the sort which would be acceptable to the church be built up at the Civic Library and made available to parish libraries which were willing to develop their physical facilities to meet certain minimum standards. The church might well agree to throw their libraries open to the community at large. Thus outlying French working class areas where small parish libraries now exist would have access to expanded and up-to-date collections.² Such a plan would serve admirably a parish library like Notre Dame de Grâce. This library, located in an outlying area in which the French Catholics are a minority, is struggling to maintain a fairly well-balanced collection on ex-

¹The total population of the twenty-four parishes served by existing parish libraries is approximately 215,000 or about one-third of the French Catholic population of Greater Montreal.

²There is precedent for such a plan in the Swiss "Bibliothèques pour Tous." The Swiss Catholic Popular Library maintains public libraries in about fifty churches by making use of traveling book collections borrowed from the central national library. H. G. Wirz, Les Bibliothèques Publiques en Suisse, Extrait de Bibliothèques Populaires et Loisirs Ouvriers, (Paris: Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle, 1933), pp. 27-28.

tremely limited funds. The intensive use which is made of this library by the parishioners demonstrates that the community is eager for library service. Doubtless there are other parish libraries which approximate the situation found in this library.

Before a detailed plan for the expansion of the parish libraries could be worked out, a more thoroughgoing study of the individual parish libraries should be undertaken. At that time minimum standards with respect to physical facilities, hours of service, et cetera, should be established. Parish libraries which could meet such minimum standards, as well as those which would be willing to expand their existing facilities to meet requirements, would be entitled to draw on the resources of the public library.

Thus the public library system of Montreal would reinforce and stimulate the further growth of the parish libraries. And the French-speaking citizens who are by and large the forgotten readers of Montreal would have readily available free reading sources approved by the church.

Administration of the library system.--With the coordination of all public and parish library services in Montreal, some all-over plan of administration would have to be devised. It is suggested that this take the form of a Metropolitan Library Commission which would be composed of a delegate from each of the four library boards, a representative appointed by the Catholic Church (to help administer the parish library plan), one member appointed by the provincial government, and a professionally trained librarian who would be appointed by the Board of the Quebec Library Association. As other municipalities of Greater Montreal develop their own public libraries (which would hold a position comparable to that of the Westmount Public Library) they would be entitled to representation on the Commission.

The establishment of such a Metropolitan Library Commission would be in keeping with existing legislation, both provincial and municipal. The provincial law permits "establishment and maintenance of a free public library" in municipalities, and there is no clause which would block the development of a public library system with a governing commission. The Montreal municipal legislation is likewise permissive and is of such a general nature that a plan such as outlined would fall within the provisions of the law.

The individual boards of the four libraries would, of course, continue to function and to decide matters relevant to the operation of each library within its functions in the library system. Indeed it would be through the efforts and cooperation of these boards that the entire plan would be brought about. The boards would select to represent them on the Commission a member to whom they would be willing to give final authority as their representative on the Commission. Decisions of the Commission affecting the total library system would therefore be final.

Financing the library plan.--It has been seen that the combined expenditures on books, periodicals and binding of the four libraries are extremely small, comparing unfavorably to most cities of equal size. Indeed the combined expenditures of the four public and twenty-four parish libraries of Montreal totaled less than one-fourth of that spent by the library system in Toronto. Although in this study library expenses for staff operation and library maintenance have not been investigated, it is apparent from the preliminary over-all review of library personnel and facilities that funds for these purposes are similarly inadequate. Obviously total budgets of the public libraries must be expanded if the library system is to grow.

Each of the libraries would continue to maintain separate budgets to cover operating expense and book purchase. In addition to this, each library would contribute to the maintenance of the central processing department (purchasing, classifying and cataloging), which, as already mentioned, could be accommodated by the Civic Library. The amount contributed by each library would be roughly proportionate to the service obtained annually by each library. Thus such a small library center as might be developed in a community like Mount Royal would not be unduly burdened with financial responsibility of this centralized service. Actually, as already mentioned, the centralizing of processing operations would reduce the costs of all the libraries and would be particularly beneficial to the smaller libraries.

In order to make the public library plan effective, however, it would be up to each board to expand their total budgets. The methods by which this would be accomplished would depend on present sources of funds. For example, the Mechanics Institute (which is supported entirely by annual subscription fees) could, with its improved facilities, put on a campaign to increase its

membership.¹ The Civic Library could increase the size of its budget requests to the City Council and this in turn might be reinforced by the circulation of petitions and similar expressions of opinion on the part of library borrowers and public-minded citizens. Such campaigns for the improvement of library service would do much to benefit the library system not only financially but also by bringing library service to the attention of all citizens.

The Commission of Enquiry into the library situation in Canada has an excellent suggestion with respect to the financing of collections to be loaned to parish libraries:

This commission would suggest that the Provincial Government should consider the advisability of making its money grants to these parishes on the basis of dollar for dollar on the amounts expended for books during the year, as set forth in the annual reports forwarded to the government.²

The Commission believes that such payments should be made on amounts expended by each library for books during the year and that a maximum limit of \$200 be set for any parish library. It might be more feasible, however, if a lump sum were delegated by the Provincial Government with the understanding that parish libraries which meet minimum standards of operation³ could combine their resources to match these provincial funds. The extent of financial responsibility of each library in meeting the quota would be set according to the size of the library. Such funds could be raised by bazaars and other charitable events held in the parishes.

Feasibility of the plan.--The coordination of public library facilities in Montreal is not an entirely new idea. In the first decade of the twentieth century various suggestions were made for the amalgamation of the collections in existence at that time. In 1912, the Mechanics Institute discussed possible amalgamation with the Fraser Institute. In the last twenty years the

¹This was done by the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec in 1928.

²Commission of Enquiry into the Library Situation in Canada, Libraries in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press; Chicago, American Library Association, 1933), p. 42.

³Such standards, which have already been referred to in an earlier section of this chapter, could be set by the Metropolitan Library Commission.

libraries have developed independently without any attempt to integrate their services.

The establishment of a Commission to handle library matters is not without precedent in Montreal. In 1921, a Montreal Metropolitan Commission was created. Its purpose was "to administer the finances of three bankrupt towns and to supervise the finances of twelve other municipalities adjacent to the city of Montreal."¹ The result has been successful "both in bettering the financial position of the delinquents and in maintaining the credit of all the municipalities under its control."² It has also had the effect of awakening public opinion to take a more active interest in civic administration. The Commission is composed of fifteen delegates appointed by its member municipalities, with an additional member appointed by the provincial government. Although its supervision is limited to financial affairs, the scheme has been recognized as a successful experiment in regional government³ and as one which demonstrates "the practicability of combining decentralization in civic government and centralized administration of an interurban character."⁴

With this plan as a precedent, there is reason to suppose that regional library cooperation entered into voluntarily by the existing public and parish libraries should not be difficult to accomplish.

Obviously the establishment of any such plan would at the outset require that a more exhaustive study be made of existing collections, as well as of present personnel and practices of the libraries and operating costs. The present functions of the four public libraries appear to complement one another so that they might well form the nucleus for a well-rounded library sys-

¹C. R. Woodruff, "Montreal Metropolitan Commission," National Municipal Review, XXVII (1938), 458-59.

²Ibid.

³The commission is regarded as laying the foundations for a borough system of government. It has been suggested that the central council take over "the powers and duties of present municipalities in regard to water supply, main highways, main drainage sewage, transportation, town planning and metropolitan police." Frederick Wright, "A Federated Government for Greater Montreal," National Municipal Review, XVI (1927), 24-26.

⁴Frederick Wright, "Montreal Metropolitan Commission," National Municipal Review, XVI (1927), 435-37.

tem which, if properly developed, could adequately meet the reading needs of the Montreal community. The coordination of these libraries, one with the other, and with the parish libraries, as well as the financing of such a project, is an undertaking which would require tireless effort on the part of the boards of all the libraries as well as on the part of public-spirited citizens of Montreal.

